

1 Kings 16 - Baasha; Elah; Zimri; Omri; Ahab

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(7) Baasha's reign in the North (15:33—16:7)

(8) Elah's reign in the North (16:8-14)

(9) Zimri's reign in the North (16:15-20)

(10) Omri's reign in the North (16:21-28)

(11) Ahab's reign in the North (16:29-34)

1 Kings 16

(7) Baasha's reign in the North (15:33—16:7)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

1 Later, a message came from the LORD to Hanani's son Jehu. It was directed to rebuke Baasha, and this is what it said:

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

- Jehu the prophet must be distinguished from Jehu the king of Israel (841-814 BC)

— This prophet was the son of Hanani, also a prophet

— This Hanani may have been the prophet who warned King Asa of Judah (2 Chr 16:7-9)

2 "Since I exalted you from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have misled My people Israel into sin, provoking Me to anger with their sins,

2 "Inasmuch as I exalted you from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made My people Israel sin, provoking Me to anger with their sins,

2 "I raised you from the dirt to become Commander-in-Chief over my people Israel, but you've been living like Jeroboam, you've been leading my people Israel into sin, and you've been provoking me to anger with their sins.

2 Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;

- God said He had lifted Baasha up from the dust and made him leader of the Israelites. This implies that Baasha had a lowly origin.

— Baasha evidently regarded his lowly origin to Israel's throne as an opportunity to fulfill personal ambition rather than glorify God

3 behold, I am going to burn Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

3 behold, I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

3 So watch out! I'm going to devour Baasha and his household. I'm going to make your household just like the household of Jeroboam, Nebat's son.

3 Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

- For Baasha's failure, God announced that He would cut off his line as He had Jeroboam's (Cf. 14:11)

4 Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city, the dogs will eat; and anyone belonging to him who dies in the field, the birds of the sky will eat."

4 Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs will eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat."

4 Anyone from Baasha's household who dies in the city will be eaten by dogs, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the sky will eat."

4 Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.

- Almost the same words used to describe Baasha's future judgment had been given to Jeroboam by the Prophet Ahijah (Cf. 14:7,10-11) and were given later by Elijah to Ahab (21:24)

— The fact that Baasha did not turn to the Lord in spite of his being God's instrument of judgment on the house of Jeroboam suggests his complete blindness to the importance of spiritual matters in his own life and in that of his nation

— Baasha committed the same sins himself. This indicates that the level of his apostasy was deep.

— God ended Baasha's reign for two reasons: his continuation of Jeroboam's idolatry and the motive and manner in which he assassinated Nadab (Cf. v7)

5 Now *as for* the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

5 Now the rest of Baasha's accomplishments, including everything that he undertook, as well as his strengths, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, are they not?

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

6 And Baasha lay down with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and his son Elah became king in his place.

6 And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son became king in his place.

6 Eventually, Baasha died, as had his ancestors, and he was buried in Tirzah. His son Elah was installed as king in his place.

6 So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead.

7 Moreover, the word of the LORD through the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came against Baasha and his household, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, by being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it.

7 Moreover, the word of the LORD through the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani also came against Baasha and his household, both because of all the evil which he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it.

7 In addition, a message from the LORD came through Hanani's son Jehu the prophet against Baasha and his household, not only because of all of the things that Baasha did that the LORD considered to be evil, including provoking the LORD to anger by what he did and by being like the household of Jeroboam, but also because Baasha had destroyed Jeroboam's household.

7 And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam; and because he killed him.

- The prophet God used was Jehu, whose father Hanani was also a prophet in Judah (Cf. 2 Chr 16:7)

— On the basis of v7 it appears that the prophetic ministry of Jehu continued throughout Elah's reign

— Blessed is the king whose prophet is his counselor, but cursed is he who heeds not his prophet

- The writer followed his regular recording of the facts surrounding the king's death with an additional re-emphasis on the reasons for Baasha's judgment by God:
— Baasha's destruction of Jeroboam's house (family or dynasty) was one reason. Even though God determined that Jeroboam's dynasty would be destroyed and announced this beforehand through Ahijah, God held Baasha responsible for killing Jeroboam's descendants. In doing so Baasha had not acted under God's direction, but only to gain his own ends.

The dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha were alike in several respects: (1) Both were only two generations long; (2) The first king in each dynasty reigned for a fairly long time: Jeroboam 22 years and Baasha 24; (3) Assassins, who were apparently confidants that the kings trusted, terminated both dynasties; and, (4) Each assassin not only killed the king but also all his male descendants, as was customary.

(8) Elah's reign in the North (16:8-14)

8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel at Tirzah, *and reigned* for two years.

8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel at Tirzah, *and reigned* two years.

8 During the twenty-sixth year of the reign of King Asa of Judah, Baasha's son Elah became king over Israel and reigned at Tirzah for two years.

8 In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years.

- Elah assumed the throne of Israel and reigned in Tirzah, the capital

— His reign (886–885 BC), a brief and unhappy one, lasted just one year and continued the wicked policies of his predecessors (v13); it ended in a violent death

9 And his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now Elah *was* in Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who *was* in charge of the household in Tirzah.

9 His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he *was* at Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who *was* over the household at Tirzah.

9 But his servant Zimri, who commanded half of his chariot forces, conspired against Elah while he was drinking himself drunk in the home of Arza, who managed the household at Tirzah.

9 And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of his house in Tirzah.

10 Then Zimri came in and struck him and put him to death in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and he became king in his place.

10 Then Zimri went in and struck him and put him to death in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and became king in his place.

10 Zimri went inside, attacked him, and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of King Asa of Judah, and then became king in Elah's place.

10 And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

- As commander of half of Elah's chariots, Zimri was a powerful military officer

— No specific accomplishments are recorded for Elah; he is infamous as the king who was murdered while getting drunk.

— Thus a third dynasty came to the throne of Israel—if, indeed a line that ruled for only seven days can be dignified as a "dynasty"

11 And when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male alive, either of his relatives or of his friends.

11 It came about when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends.

11 As soon as he had consolidated his reign, he executed the entire household of Baasha. He did not leave a single male alive, including any of Baasha's relatives or friends.

11 And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends.

- Baasha's dynasty ended with Elah's death, as the prophet Jehu had foretold (Cf. v3)

12 So Zimri eliminated all the household of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet,

12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet,

12 In doing so, Zimri destroyed the entire household of Baasha, in keeping with the message from the LORD that he had spoken against Baasha through Jehu the prophet

12 Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet,

13 for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of his son Elah, which they committed and into which they misled Israel, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.

13 for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.

13 because of all the sins that Baasha and his son Elah had committed and because of what they did to lead Israel into sin, thus provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idolatry.

13 For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

- Again the writer identified the spiritual root of the judgment

14 Now *as for* the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

14 Now the rests of Elah's accomplishments, including everything he undertook, are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, are they not?

14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

- Zimri completely destroyed Israel's second ruling family plus friends of the family in order to avoid retaliation against his coup d'etat

(9) Zimri's reign in the North (16:15-20)

15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned for seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were camped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.

15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days at Tirzah. Now the people were camped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.

15 Zimri reigned for seven days at Tirzah during the twenty-seventh year of the reign of King Asa of Judah. At that time, the army was encamped in a siege against Gibbethon of Philistia.

15 In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.

- Zimri's seven-day reign (885 BC) proved to be the shortest of any Israelite king

— Gibbethon in Philistia was again under siege by Israel's army (Cf. 15:27)

16 And the people who were camped heard it being said, "Zimri has conspired and has also struck and killed the king!" Therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

16 The people who were camped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired and has also struck down the king." Therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

16 The army at the encampment heard this report: "Zimri has conspired against the king and killed him." So the entire army of Israel made Omri, their commander, king over Israel.

16 And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

- Omri was commander-in-chief of Israel's army, out-ranking Zimri

— When word of Zimri's assassination of Elah reached the soldiers at Gibbethon (Cf. 15:27), they immediately sided with their general and marched back to the capital to claim the throne for Omri

- It probably took a runner two days to reach the army at Gibbethon after the assassination of Elah. The troops immediately heralded Omri as the new king even though Zimri had declared himself king in Tirzah.

17 Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah.

17 Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah.

17 Then Omri and the entire army of Israel left from Gibbethon and attacked Tirzah.

17 And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

- Zimri was not an acceptable candidate for the throne in the minds of Omri and his men as they marched back to the capital. They appeared at the city walls (probably after marching about four or five days) and took control of the city.

18 When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over himself with fire, and died,

18 When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire, and died,

18 When Zimri observed that the city had been captured, he retreated into the king's palace, set fire to the citadel, and died when the palace burned down around him

18 And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,

- Zimri apparently knew he could not retain his throne or save his life, so he did as much damage to the palace as he could while taking his own life

— Zimri realized he could not oppose Omri successfully, so he chose suicide over execution and destroyed the palace in the process

19 because of his sins which he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he committed, misleading Israel into sin.

19 because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin.

19 because of the sins that he committed by doing what the LORD considered to be evil, living like Jeroboam did, and sinning so as to lead Israel into sin.

19 For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.

- It was because of his sins in following Jeroboam's ways that God permitted Zimri to fail in his seizure of power and to die

20 Now *as for* the rest of the acts of Zimri and his conspiracy which he carried out, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and his conspiracy which he carried out, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

20 The rest of Zimri's accomplishments, including his conspiracy that he carried out, are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, are they not?

20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

(10) Omri's reign in the North (16:21-28)

21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; the *other* half followed Omri.

21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; the *other* half followed Omri.

21 The army of Israel was divided into two parties: half of the army were loyal to Ginath's son Tibni and wanted to make him king, and half were loyal to Omri.

21 Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri.

- The death of Zimri (v17-18) did not automatically place the kingdom in Omri's hands. Half the population including the army sided with him, but the other half preferred Tibni.

— During this time civil war ravaged Israel and threatened to split the Northern Kingdom into two parts. Tibni's strength can be seen in that he was able to oppose Omri successfully for six years (885-880 BC).

22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. And Tibni died and Omri became king.

22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. And Tibni died and Omri became king.

22 But the army that was loyal to Omri was victorious over Ginath's son Tibni. Tibni later died and Omri became king.

22 But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

- Eventually Omri overpowered Tibni and became the sole ruler (880-874 BC)

- Omri's army support apparently proved decisive and Tibni died, probably by being executed

- The series of assassinations in 886 BC led to the crowning of Omri, a ranking army officer

- Capable and aggressive, Omri quickly stabilized the nation. He built and fortified Samaria as the capital and so impressed the Assyrians that a hundred years later Israel was known by them as the "land of Omri."

- The Bible tells us little about Omri's reign (v23-27), but archeology has added several important bits of information:

The Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone is a black basalt memorial stone discovered in Moab by a German missionary in 1868. Nearly four feet high, it contained about 34 lines in an alphabet similar to Hebrew. The stone was probably erected about 850 BC by the Moabite King Mesha. King Mesha's story written on the stone celebrated his overthrow of the nation of Israel. This event apparently is recorded in 2 Kings 3:4-27, although the Biblical account makes it clear that Israel was victorious in the battle. The passage shows that Mesha honors his god Chemosh in terms similar to the OT reverence for the Lord. The inhabitants of entire cities were apparently slaughtered to appease this deity, recalling the similar practices of the Israelites, especially as described in the Book of Joshua.

Besides telling of his violent conquests, Mesha boasted on the stone of the building of cities (with Israelite forced labor) and the construction of cisterns, walls, gates, towers, a king's palace, and even a highway. The Moabite stone has profound Biblical relevance. Historically, it confirms OT accounts. It has a theological parallel to Israel's worship of one god. It is also valuable geographically because it mentions no less than 15 sites listed in the OT. The writing on the stone also resembles Hebrew, the language in which most of the OT was originally written. Some pieces of the stone are now housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The marriage of his son Ahab to the Phoenician princess Jezebel indicates close relations with Phoenicia, a valuable trading ally for Israel. It is likely that much of the wealth of Samaria revealed by archaeological expeditions has roots in the diplomacy and statecraft of Omri. Yet in Scripture the focus clearly is not on the political and economic

affairs of God's people. The focus instead is placed on the religious and moral dimensions of life.

23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel *and reigned* for twelve years; he reigned for six years at Tirzah.

23 In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel *and reigned* twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah.

23 During the thirty-first year of the reign of King Asa of Judah, Omri became king over Israel. He reigned for twelve years, six of them at Tirzah.

23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.

- The twelve years of his reign are computed from the beginning of his reign, which was in the 27th year of Asa's reign

— He held a contested reign for four years with Tibni and then, at the date stated in this verse, entered on a sole and peaceful reign of eight years

— For the first six years of his reign (885-880 BC) Omri ruled in the old capital of Tirzah (Cf. 14:17; 15:21,33; 16:6,8-9,15,17), but then he moved into his brand new capital, Samaria

24 And he purchased the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.

24 He bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.

24 He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver, fortified the hill, and named the city Samaria after Shemer, the former owner of the hill.

24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.

- No doubt the desolation wrought by Zimri's fire was one of the factors that made a new capital highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary

— He built this city on a hill, well situated for defense, 12 miles west of Tirzah. The palace of Tirzah being in ruins, Omri, in selecting the site of his royal residence, was naturally influenced by considerations both of pleasure and advantage. In the center of a wide amphitheatre of mountains, about seven miles from Shechem, rises an oblong hill with steep, yet accessible sides, and a long flat top extending east and west, and rising 500-600 feet above the valley.

- Omri paid Shemer two talents (ca. 150 pounds) of silver for the hill (Samaria was named after Shemer; Cf. v24)

- Omri was probably the strongest leader of the Northern Kingdom up to that time
- Assyrian records dating from over a century later refer to Israel as “the land of Omri.” During Omri’s reign, Ben-Hadad I, king of the Arameans in Damascus, continued to add to his holdings to the north of Israel.
- Omri’s son, Ahab, had difficulty containing these Aramean aggressors. Also the Assyrian Empire was growing stronger and farther to the northeast under Ashurnasirpal II (883-859), and proceeded to expand its territory as far west as the Mediterranean Sea.
- Faced by these threats on his north, Omri was able to protect Israel well enough to attack and defeat Moab to the southeast at the same time. This victory is referred to on the famous Moabite Stone.
- Another of Omri’s significant achievements was his alliance with the Phoenicians which was sealed with the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, a daughter of the Phoenician king Ethbaal (Cf. v31).

25 Now Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who *were* before him.

25 Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, and acted more wickedly than all who *were* before him.

25 Omri practiced what the LORD considered to be evil, doing far more evil than anyone who had reigned before him.

25 But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him.

26 For he walked entirely in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sins into which he misled Israel, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel with their idols.

26 He lived just like Nebat’s son Jeroboam, and by his sin he led Israel into sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel with their idolatry.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

- Though Omri is passed over quickly in 1 Kings, he was a powerful and politically effective king. But the major concern of the writer of 1 Kings was Omri’s spiritual condition.

27 Now *as for* the rest of the acts of Omri which he did and his might which he displayed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did and his might which he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

27 Now the rest of Omri's accomplishments, including the power that he demonstrated, are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, are they not?

27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

28 And Omri lay down with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and his son Ahab became king in his place.

28 So Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son became king in his place.

28 So Omri died, as had his ancestors, and he was buried in Samaria. His son Ahab became king in his place.

28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

- Omri was the founder of the fourth dynasty of Israelite kings. His rule passed to his son, Ahab

— Omri's key significance seems to have been that he fathered Ahab who was, without question, the most evil ruler to that point

The Period of Alliance (1 Kings 16:29—2 Kings 9:29)

King Jehoshaphat of Judah made peace with King Ahab of Israel (22:44). He did so by arranging a marriage between his son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chr 18:1). This ended the first period of antagonism between the two kingdoms (931-874 BC) and began a 33-year period of alliance (874-841 BC).

(11) Ahab's reign in the North (16:29-34)

Ahab ruled Israel from Samaria for 22 years (874-853 BC). He was the most wicked king Israel had experienced, even worse than his father Omri who was worse than all before him (v25). As a political and military leader, Ahab receives good marks. He was effective in defeating Israel's Syrian enemies. He joined in a coalition army which halted the invasion of a great Assyrian force under Shalmaneser III. And Ahab maintained the borders of his land. Assyrian records tell us that Ahab was able to contribute 2,000 chariots to the coalition army, as well as some 10,000 foot soldiers.

Economically, Israel also prospered. The Phoenician alliance meant that sea trade routes were open to landlocked Israel, and the great "ivory house" Ahab built for himself (1 Kings 22:39) testifies to the land's prosperity. Yet that same Phoenician alliance opened the door to introduction of Baal worship in Israel. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, a devotee of Baal, forced a direct confrontation. Jezebel was not satisfied with coexistence: she insisted that Baal worship replace any worship of Jehovah. She not only slaughtered the Hebrew

prophets of Jehovah (18:4) but she also imported hundreds of prophets of Baal to establish worship centers for this pagan deity. Jezebel and Ahab went about imposing this entire system on Israel, aggressively seeking to blot out the worship of Jehovah.

29 Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years.

29 Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.

29 Omri's son Ahab became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa of Judah. He reigned over Israel in Samaria for 22 years.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

- Ahab ruled Israel from Samaria for 22 years (874-853 BC)

— During the first of these years, Asa ruled along in Judah. Then for three years, Asa and Jehoshaphat shared the throne.

— For the remainder of Ahab's reign, Jehoshaphat ruled alone

30 Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

30 Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

30 Omri's son Ahab practiced more of what the LORD considered to be evil than anyone who had lived before him.

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

- The author had just written that Omri was the worst king so far (Cf. v25) but now he said that Ahab exceeded Omri in wickedness

31 And as though it had been **a trivial thing** for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, **he married Jezebel** the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.

31 It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.

31 In fact, as if it were nothing for him to live like Nebat's son Jeroboam, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon. Then he went out to serve Baal and worship him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

- "...a trivial thing" - for Ahab, the fact that Jeroboam's cult deviated from the Mosaic Law was "trivial"

- "...he married Jezebel" - Ahab married a pagan princess, Jezebel, who zealously tried to promote her depraved cult as the exclusive religion of Israel

— The writer held Ahab responsible for marrying Jezebel; even in arranged marriages in the ANE, the son in most cases had the right of refusal

— "Jezebel" - "dung hill"; this must have been the name the Israelites gave her

— Jezebel's father, Ethbaal, was king of the Sidonians (Phoenicians), with his capital in Tyre

— He was priest of Ashtaroht or Astarte, who, having murdered Philetos, king of Tyre, ascended the throne of that kingdom, being the eighth king since Hiram

— The marriage may have been the seal of a covenant between Omri (Israel) and Ethbaal (Sidonia) that was designed to counteract the growing threat of Damascus (Aramea)

— Like Solomon, Ahab married unwisely and his foreign wife led him further into idolatry

Jezebel was the wicked daughter of this regicide and idol priest—and, on her marriage with Ahab, never rested till she had got all the forms of her native Tyrian worship introduced into her adopted country. Evidently Ahab was not forced to marry Jezebel; his choice to marry her is something for which the text held him responsible.

32 So he erected an altar for Baal at the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.

32 So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria.

32 He built an altar for Baal in a temple for Baal that he constructed in Samaria.

32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

- The temple and altar to Baal that Ahab erected in Israel's capital symbolized his official approval of this pagan religion

— Remember the importance of David bringing the ark into Jerusalem, and Solomon building a temple for Yahweh, and what those acts symbolized

— Evidently Baal worship became widely accepted in the Northern Kingdom

- Ahab's greatest sin was that he brought the worship of Baal—the worship of the native Canaanites whom God had commanded Israel to exterminate—under the official protection and endorsement of his government.

— Jeroboam had already refashioned Yahweh worship by departing from what Moses had prescribed. Ahab went one step further: he officially replaced the worship of Yahweh with idolatry (Cf. 18:4). This was a first in Israel's history.

33 Ahab also made the **Asherah**. So Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

33 Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

33 Ahab also erected an Asherah, doing more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all of the kings of Israel who had reigned before him.

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

- "...Asherah" - these poles (Cf. 14:15,23; 15:13) were phallic symbols carved to stimulate worship of Baal's female counterpart. The text repeats the seriousness of Ahab's sins for emphasis (Cf. v30).

34 In his days Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho; he **laid its foundations** with *the loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with *the loss of* his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

34 In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

34 It was during Ahab's reign that Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations just as his firstborn son Abiram was dying, and he erected its gates while his youngest son Segub was dying, thus fulfilling the message that the LORD delivered through Nun's son Joshua.

34 In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

- The refortification of Jericho was specifically forbidden by Joshua after God supernaturally destroyed it (Joshua 6:26)

— Though the city had been occupied since Joshua's day, Hiel's reconstruction seems to have been the first serious attempt to restore it to its former condition

— The building of Jericho is also evidence of Ahab's apostasy since he must have ordered or at least permitted Hiel to rebuild the city, in spite of Joshua's long-standing curse

— Joshua's prophecy was fulfilled literally when two of Hiel's sons perished

- "...laid its foundations" - a "foundation sacrifice" revealed by modern archaeology, is probably what this was. The deceased children were probably infants, dead or alive, placed in jars and inserted into the masonry.

Perhaps this reference, which seems unrelated to Ahab's accomplishments, was included to show that as God's Word was fulfilled in this instance so it would be in Ahab's case.

Ahab was setting up a system of worship that God said He would judge, as Hiel had tried to set up a city that God had said He would judge.

Summary: The Southern Kingdom (931–586 BC)

The dreary portrait of Israel's experience under the apostate kings is lightened when we look at Judah. Politically, the Southern Kingdom knew its ups and downs as conflicts with Egypt, Israel, and other surrounding states brought alternate victories and defeats. Spiritually, Judah was blessed with several godly kings. But she also knew the rule of apostate kings who followed Solomon's example and permitted pagan worship in the holy land. Queen Athaliah (841–835 BC) struggled to introduce the cult of Baal in Judah as her mother Jezebel had in Israel.

Yet a succession of God-approved kings (Joash through Jotham) kept the extension of evil tendencies to a minimum. Still, the great revivals under Kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Joash were unable to purify the land. Much local autonomy was retained, and the piety of the king did not guarantee the holiness of his people.

Hezekiah, one of the most godly kings, guided Judah during the critical time of Israel's destruction. He instituted drastic reforms to correct the idolatry of his father Ahaz, and thoroughly cleansed the land. He was certainly influenced by two great prophetic contemporaries, Isaiah and Micah. Yet Hezekiah's own son, Manasseh, who ruled 55 years, was one of Judah's most evil men. He supported pagan worship, recognized the sacrifice of children to the Ammonite god Molech, and killed all who protested.

Tradition tells us that Isaiah met his death at Manasseh's hands. Despite a later revival under Josiah (640–609 BC), king during Habakkuk's day, the religious and moral deterioration was such that the revival made little impact on Judah. The graphic description by Jeremiah and Ezekiel (especially Ezek 8-11) of the way of life of God's people helps us see clearly why the announced judgment had to come.

And come it did. In a series of deportations, the surviving kingdom was wrenched from the land. The temple and the Holy City were razed. Under the weight of this agonizing chastisement, God's people finally did come to repent in a foreign land. There they were purified of idolatry and, finally, a remnant returned from Babylon to the Promised Land to re-establish the Jewish homeland and to await the Messiah.